

It was with this advent, in which the wage based economy emerged, to a large degree, and from that point men, women and sadly children had to sell their labour with relentless frequency to sustain themselves. It too was the period which saw continued growth in the Atlantic Slave trade, where also people were seen as commodities to be bought and sold, to earn ~~the~~ wealth for their 'owners'. It too was the time that witnessed the birth of another institution the prison-workhouse. With the new landless poor of the country came the criminalization of beggars and vagrants who wandered from place to place, uprooted from their land. It is most significant in my opinion that the practice of "forced labour" was not simply used on vagrants as punishment, but all across most parts of Europe, (especially rural society) "was a normal burden borne by everyone" (Forced Labour, Workhouse-Prisons And The Early Modern State : A case study, Thomas Munck (University of Glasgow) 1997:- Institute of Historical Research)

Munck emphasizes that "forced labour" as well as in the workhouse could take other forms such as military conscription, naval impressment, and the hiring out of conscripted troops as mercenaries to other states was common. He tells how those caught begging in Copenhagen in 1587 were made to carry symbolic markings on their clothing, (significantly as were the Jews in Nazi Germany, as I recall). It is truly disturbing that Munck when reviewing Stokhus prison/workhouse in Copenhagen that inmates are termed "slaves" and revealing of the mindset of officials (Munck ibid). In addition to this in England in 1547, The Vagrancy Act was passed that imposed/stipulated slavery as a punishment for refusal to work (CSL Davies, "Slavery and Proleter Somerset: The Vagrancy Act of 1547, abstract, The Economic History Review Vol 19 No 3 (1966) pp 533-549. www.jstor.org/stable/2593162?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)